

TRIP REPORT FOR
TANZANIA AND KENYA
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007

Kathy Berry, Jamee and Mary Ann Boucher and Emily Parnell



The Palacina Bar and Dining Room – Nairobi, Kenya

Sep 25th - After three delicious flights I arrived in Nairobi, was met by *Lydia* of Origins and waited for Emily, Mary Ann and Jamee to arrive. Lydia and I enjoyed some tea and conversation but did not have to wait long. Everyone was in good spirits but ready to get to the hotel. Andrew and Lydia transferred us to the Palacina Hotel which was lovely – even in the dark. The rooms were up steep stairs but well worth the trip. Our rooms were actually suites with a large sitting area with a mini -bar and lots of other amenities. The bedroom was large also and the bathroom was spotless and beautifully appointed. They have hair dryers and nice shampoo, soap and lotion.

We were up early to have the breakfast supplied by the Palacina. It was a very nice self -serve buffet with pancakes, eggs and other hot items to order. Checked out havin g only to pay for what we had eaten from the mini-bar.

Lydia and Andrew took us to the new Origins office in a classy and new office building with lots of security. Met with *Jamila and Maryann* and got to meet the rest of the staff who were in the offic e. Left ATWC for Steve and little gifts from AAC to Jamila and Maryann. (Steve was in Ethiopia).

We got to Wilson Airport (new and BIG since last visit in 2003) in time to have a spot of tea and check in. The flight was on time, so we were off to Kilim anjaro, leaving two large suitcases full of school supplies to be distributed in Kenya with the rest of the school supplies going with us on to Tanzania.

We were met by Firoz at Kili Airport. He took us on an hour or so drive to Arusha Coffee Lodge to me et with Ranger Safaris' Evans to have the briefing for our trip. He did not amend his talk even though we had heard lots from Firoz since arriving and all had been on safari before. It was the same as for those who had never been to Africa before. We enjoyed the visit and the scenery however. Then we head off to **Tarangire Treetops** to try to make it before sunset.

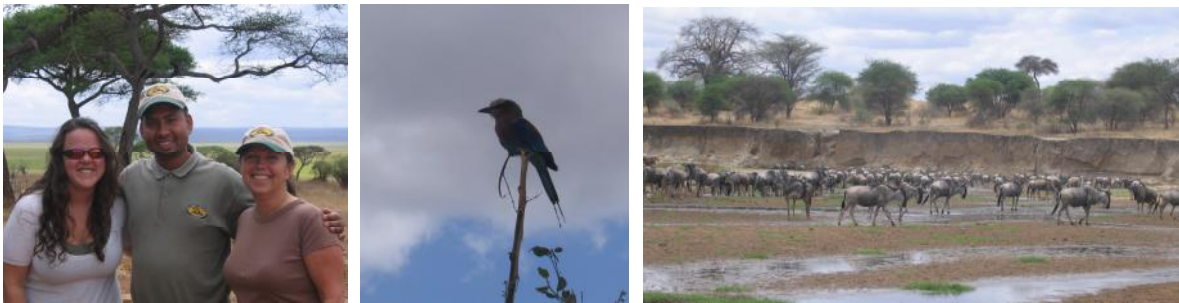
The drive to the camp is on very rough roads and there is not much in the way of animals to look at. It is pretty much just a drive through the country and is not comfortable for people with back problems. We were all fine and did not notice the ride that much as we were excited about being in Africa, but others at Tarangire Treetops mentioned that it was a tough drive for them.



Tarangire Treetops #7 as a triple, view from balcony in the trees and bathroom

The staff was very hospitable and friendly and sincerely seemed to want to not only get us what we wanted but also wanted to get to know us as people. Emily and I were in one of the closest rooms to the main lobby, dining room and pool - #7. This room also had a long ramp up to the room instead of stairs, so it could be used by older people (!) and those handicapped in any way. They have beautiful rooms with all the amenities and lots of room in which to maneuver.

On our first night game drive we saw civet, genet, African wild cat and the usual suspects. The game drive was with the local guide. We had excellent long game drives with Firoz during the days and got to stay to see the animals as long as we wished. He was informative, friendly and became part of the family.



Jamee, Firoz and Mary Ann, lilac-breasted roller and Tarangire River with wildebeest

The food was excellent and you normally have one waiter/barman for your stay. They were very conscientious about having food without nuts for Jamee. All drinks and laundry are included – a huge plus. The manager was around but not intrusive, wants more AAC business but recognized we send lots.

While waiting for us for a late afternoon hike, Jamee was treated to the sight of an elephant coming past her by the pool - within two feet of her! She was told to be quiet but she was screaming on the inside. She had to step back from the elephant to get her camera to focus. She loved it! They have: hairdryers; electricity in the rooms but no email or internet access except in an emergency.

After three wonderful nights we had a great game drive on our way to **E Unoto Retreat**. The closer we got the more desolate the landscape with only a few Masai villages in the valley. Lunch at the Retreat was a treat with excellent burgers and plenty of diet coke. Our Masai waiter was with us for all our meals. The walkway to the rooms is a heavily textured concrete that makes the long walk to the rooms (room A is closest to the dining and public areas, B next, etc.) safe and not slippery in the least. There is not a lot of light at night with the lanterns and flashlights but it seemed to be more than adequate. The rooms are round but that is about all that truly relates to a Masai manyatta. Each room is large and has a bathroom with a separate shower and toilet and two sinks. There is no electricity and no hair dryer but the entertainment is exciting! After dinner there was an acrobatic troupe that was excellent and then a

group of Masai dancers entertained and our waiter joined in! Should have had more tip money with us at the shows!



E Unoto Retreat pool area overlooking lake, Emily in the room and the path up to our “manyatta”

After a false start the next morning we were off to Ngorongoro where the clouds at the top of the crater were very heavy. We were more than halfway down into the crater when the clouds slowly disappeared and we were able to see that the crater was clear as a bell. While it was not as dusty as I expected there were also not as many active animals either. The usual game was about in addition to some very full lions, four young black-backed jackal brothers and a herd of wildebeest surrounding our vehicle. We stayed for most of the day looking for a rhino and a cheetah or two.



Ngorongoro Crater

After a bit of pleading, Firoz took us to a grocery store in Kiratu to pick up some supplies for a new children’s orphanage he knew of named Shalom. We were happy to meet 32 children from 3 years to 14 years old who wanted to hold our hands and play games and talk and laugh. We got a short tour from the daughter of the woman who began the orphanage three years earlier with three children from one family. It was amazing to see what one woman’s dream could become and will continue to become!

Then we drove on to **Gibbs Farm** for the night. New cottages are huge and nicely furnished but there are no signs to lead first timers to the lounge. Having been here last year I had a definite advantage and did not get lost once while the others had a hard time! Dinner was good but since it was very busy and not buffet style it was a bit of a letdown for me but not the others. We had a grand time too at the *great* gift shop! It was our first time to get to see lots of Africa goods and crafts and we took full advantage of the time after dinner and before breakfast!

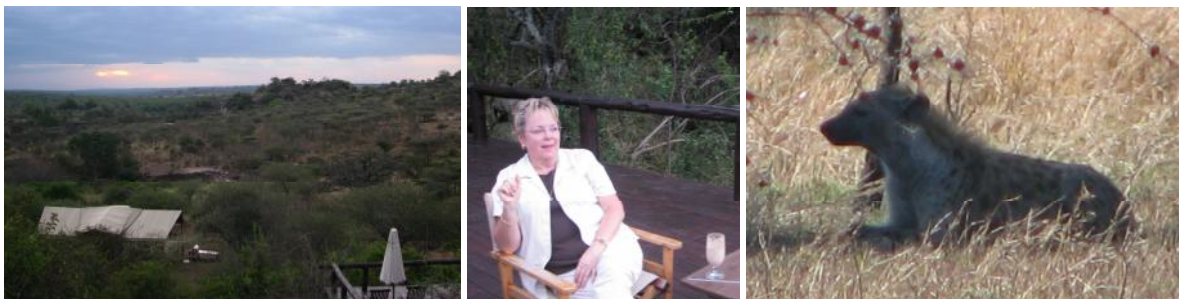
The next morning Firoz drove us to the Iraqw Center for some more shopping with Daniel and Elizabeth on the way to the Lake Manyara airstrip to bid us farewell. Thankfully he checked on our flight and hurried to get us on board as we were all thinking the flight that had landed was *not* ours but, of course, it was. We travel onward to the Lobo airstrip and on to **Migration Camp** but are sad to say bye to Firoz.

This camp in the north of the Serengeti is far from most other camps but is still accessible to lots of the Serengeti. It is a beautiful camp built in the hills and rocks but the rooms are down on the plains close to the Grumeti River and the hippos. The rooms are not too close to one another but if someone is shouting or loud in another room close by, you can hear it as there is no vegetation between the tents. You can also hear the hippos at night! The tents are on wooden platforms but the part of the room that is the bath and shower is a permanent structure that is integrated into the tent. There are safes, hair dryers and a beautiful bath area. The walk from the rooms up to the main lounge and dining area is a slate stairway that is built to be easily traversed. It is great after all the sitting in the vehicles! The staff and management here are very attentive and want to please. They are professional but comfortable. The food was best here although Serian camp is a very close second. The meals on the deck overlooking the plains were spectacular even in total darkness (if the camp is full, you need to ask for outside seating at breakfast before going on your game drive).



Mother cheetah and her four almost grown cubs; two klipspringer and a lioness posing by the road

Moses was our resident guide and a bit stiff for this group. He wanted to tell us everything – even if we already knew it! By the time we left three days later, he was much friendlier! We ended up having great game drives with him – he took us down to the Seronera one day so the other girls could see the animals in the central Serengeti. We were treated to a lioness on the side of the road, a gorgeous lion couple under a tree and on the way back to Migration, a leopard in a tree on the Grumeti River.



View from Migration Camp; Sundowners (amarula & diet coke) and hyena posing

Our time in the Serengeti was magical and even without Firoz was an incredible three days of game viewing and good food and friends/family.

Moses gave us an interesting game drive back to the Lobo airstrip for our eventful flight to Arusha. On the flight we were excited to see the active volcano Ol Donya Lengai. Other later trips close by would not be as exciting as there was no smoke later. Other than Lengai, it was an uneventful flight!

We were met at Arusha Airport and taken to Arusha Coffee Lodge for lunch. We ate outside and freshened up before heading to the shops. We bought plenty but not as much as I had expected! The 'tourist trap' shops were a bit more expensive than even last year. Inflation is alive and well in Tanzania!



Ol Donya Lengai letting off some steam

After shopping we were taken to the Ranger office to meet with Abbas Moledina and the staff that were still there – Abbas Lalji and several people from accounting. Talked with Abbas for a while, had him meet the family and let him get to his Ramadhan dinner. We went back to ACL where the wife of my guide from last year (Ephata) Frida and their two children Ines (4) and Ince (1) had come to meet us. We exchanged gifts and invited them to dinner but they needed to get home. It was an exciting visit for me.

On our way out of Arusha we tried to shop at a more “local” shop with much better prices. Unfortunately for all, after we had picked out lots of goodies, their credit card machine would not connect (busy) and we had no extra cash. We tried to use the ATM at the airport but could not get enough money there (limit of about \$80 US) for the transaction.

We flew to Nairobi on Air Kenya (flight was fine though late) and were quickly ushered through customs at Wilson for continuation of the same airplane on to the Mara. Andrew from Origins kindly had two bags of school supplies brought to the plane so that we could distribute them in the Masai Mara. Again, we were late leaving but Daniel (Masai) and Dixon from **Serian Camp** were there to meet us. Also there to welcome us to the Mara were a lion couple. It was heart-pumping as we had only been in the vehicle a minute or two when the lions were spotted and as you can tell from the picture below, the plane was just departing!



When we topped the third hill in the Mara and were greeted with wildebeests from one end of our view to the other, I was more humbled than I thought possible. While I had known that the migration was in the Mara, I had not thought that the sight would be overwhelming or as transient as it was. We traveled over a few more rolling hills to find no wildebeest at all. Amazing how that many animals can be seen and then not seen within less than a mile. It was a great trip, though the roads were typical, to the camp.





On the way to Serian Camp, our bathroom (under the thatch) and the bedroom tent (not connected!)

In the Serian Camp brochure, Alex Walker claims that it is ‘his charismatic home’. I asked him about that since only people can be charismatic, his response – “This camp is a living breathing entity that is thus entitled to be called by any human adjective!” I agreed after being there! The rushing rapids in the Mara River below are a constant reminder that you are in a very special place. The people are welcoming, kind and most helpful. Everyone here too wants to get to know you as well as serve you. Although Alex thought diet coke and amarula was “disgusting” and would not even have a sip, he was forgiven and allowed to watch the rugby world cup!

The bedrooms are large tents while the closely situated bathrooms are concrete and thatch and gorgeous! One corner of our terra cotta bathtub was a tree! The other bathroom had the shower coming out of a tree! It is a beautiful and yet very comfortable place. There are orphaned impala that stay around the camp (eating whatever vegetables and herbs they like from the camp gardens) and while not tame are definitely habituated. While we were there, a newborn tommie was brought to the camp.



Jamee with the resident impala, the bathroom (note shower) and Mary Ann, Alex and Jamee

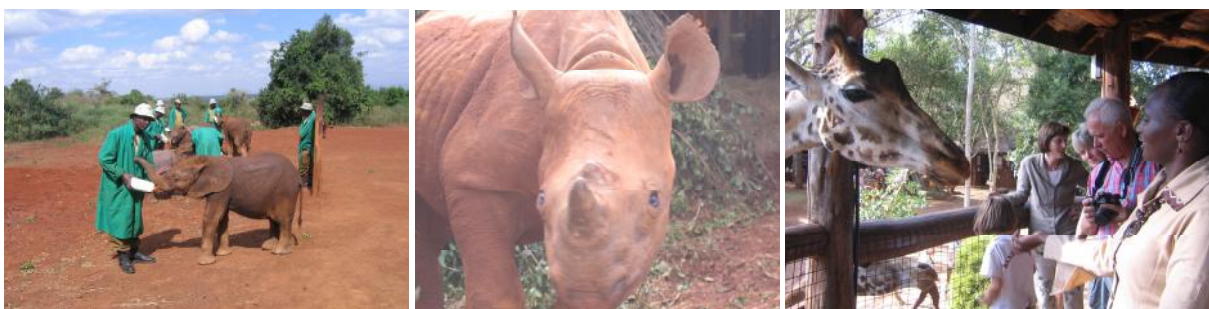
We took the luggage with the school supplies to Daniel’s village and had a terrific and most educational time there. We got the grand tour (\$10 each with unlimited photos allowed!) and were pleased when all the children were seated on a small grassy patch in the middle of the manyattas so that we could distribute the supplies. It was a hoot and there was a lot less greed shown than we have seen in the US. We loved meeting all the ladies, the children and the young warriors. The elders were at the market selling cattle.



The Masai Warriors, our tracker Daniel with his baby brother and the children patiently waiting

We had excellent game drives with other vehicles around rarely if ever. We saw more day old impala babies and very small elephants than we had seen before. We also saw many lion, a couple of leopard, lots of very full cheetah and so many vultures feeding on the remains of the wildebeests. Jamee and Mary Ann took the balloon safari from Governor's Camp and loved every moment of it. They were dismayed that we had not wanted to go again and again since it is so much fun. We had more than our share of the most exciting game viewing ever. We would all go back to Serian Camp and the Mara in a heartbeat.

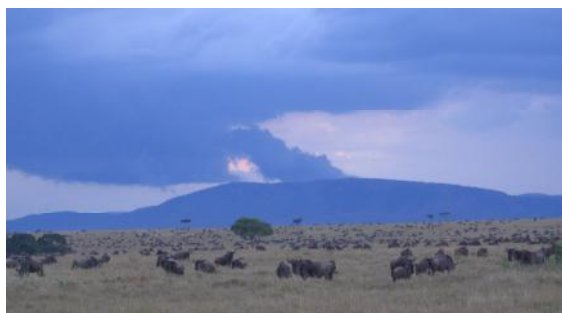
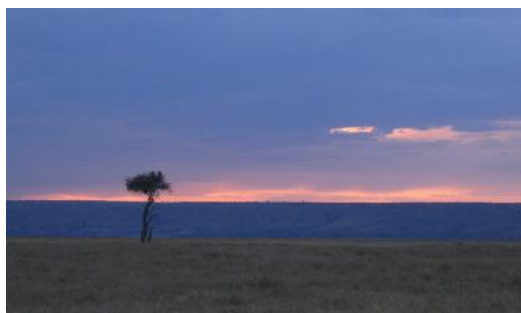
Our flight out of the Mara was not when we thought it was, or was very late or whatever but we were at the airstrip for three plus hours before we got on a plane. I would, of course, have rather been on a game drive!



Daphne Sheldrick- orphaned baby elephants and orphaned black rhino and Lydia feeding the giraffe

We did make it to Nairobi just in time for Lydia and Andrew to pull off the most wonderful and full afternoon for us. We went to Daphne Sheldrick to see the baby elephants and got to feed them a bottle or two. Then we went to see the baby black rhino (our first and only rhino – so we saw the Big Five!) that is blind and was orphaned. He is getting operations that are expected to help him regain some sight. Lydia and Andrew then took us for a bite to eat and tried to find us an ATM and a drugstore before taking us to the Giraffe Center to feed the Rothschild giraffes. We then found the ATM where we got Kenya shillings to donate to another children's orphanage we visited in Nairobi called Nyumbani. We were told of new projects they are starting outside of Nairobi as well as the continuing work there. It is a beautiful place run by the Catholic Church.

Oct 09 - After a long drive in rush hour we were treated to dinner at the Panari Restaurant that is nicer than the Carnivore but has the same type of menu and buffet as our own Chima. We ate, changed into our traveling clothes and headed to the airport. We profusely thanked Andrew and Lydia for getting us to all we wanted to see and do in the shorted period of time. They were great! We were met at the airport by the Peck Air representatives (one for me *KLM* and one for the other three *BA*) and escorted through the airline counter, customs and up to the lounge. Great service! We met up with each other in the hugely improved (since my last trip in 2003) Nairobi Airport departure areas to shop before we said goodbye and left on our flights home. All are ready to go again.





Kathy, Daniel and Mary Ann at Serian Camp



Jamee, Emily, Kathy and Mary Ann enjoyi ng tea



Emily, Kathy, Mary Ann and Jamee at Serian Camp

KENYA 2007 – Milissa Rubino

My trip to Kenya in March of 2007 was a gift for the soul.

As a travel professional, we are privy to visiting many places in a short period of time. This allows us to obtain a greater sense of what an area has on offer.

My colleague, Janet Kenny, and I stayed in 10 locations over a period of 11 nights. Starting with a peaceful boutique hotel (House of Waine) located in the suburbs of Nairobi. We enjoyed a visit to the Giraffe center where you can feed the giraffe from a raised platform. Being so close to this magnificent, powerful animal was amazing!



Our safari experience began with a flight to Amboseli and the camp Tortilis. I was awestruck by the surreal view of a snow capped Mount Kilimanjaro rising up in front of us as we exited the airplane. A walk to the top of Observation Hill was a foreshadowing of the vast plains views that lay ahead. Shaba to the north was rugged and beautiful. Joy's Camp with its Moroccan influenced theme is a jewel. Our next stop was Meru and then on to Laikipia where we visited the Loisaba House, Cottage and Lodge (the gift shop at the lodge is not to be missed). Our accommodation that evening was the Koija Star beds, which are reached by a swinging footbridge and hosted by the local people. We enjoyed eating and dancing with our hosts who eagerly shared their culture and insight into their unique beaded ornamentation.



We took a Camel ride to our next lodge in Laikipia called Sabuk. I fell in love with the scenery of this area! The lodge is perched high on the banks of the Ewaso Ng'iro River and overlooks the Laikipia Plateau. The cottages are open to the river gorge below and offer breathtaking views. The after dinner show included a magical view of the sky filled with millions of stars, including the Milky Way!

We said goodbye to the rugged, northern country and headed to the Maasai Mara. Tented camps included Cottars 1920's and Richards. We finished our Mara experience at Saruni Camp situated in a remote valley north of the Mara National Reserve. Other than the traditional game viewing by vehicle, you can enjoy bird and butterfly walks around property. By special permission, our guide took us to a local market to view cattle sales and even purchased some curios and beautifully printed cloths from the ladies.

We enjoyed learning about the local culture from everyone, especially our guides during walks and drives. I was particularly inspired by three Kenyan women managers who showed great strength, character and love of their country.



Animal highlights on this trip were several cheetah (including a kill), herds of elephant grazing with their young, Maasai giraffe and a journey of “chocolate colored” reticulated giraffe galloping across the plains. I also enjoyed my first multiple sightings of Gerenuk and the miniature antelope, Dikdik.

Our last experience in Kenya was on the Island of Lamu at Manda Bay resort where we enjoyed the superb hospitality of the owners and staff. Snorkeling in the Indian Ocean felt a bit like being in my saltwater fish tank at home where I recognized many colorful friends! The food was also incredible!

I would gladly visit these places again and am happy to share more details with our valued clients!

